

JOINT CAPITAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Fiscal Year 2007

Section 5.2 of the Amherst Town Government Act states that “the Town Manager, with the advice of a joint capital planning committee comprised of representatives from the Select Board, finance committee, school committee and library trustees, shall develop a capital improvement program to be presented to the select board, finance committee, school committee and library trustees in time to be included in the finance committee report to the next annual town meeting.” The Joint Capital Planning Committee (JCPC) has two members each from the Select Board, School Committee, Library Trustees and Finance Committee. The JCPC’s focus during FY 07 was to update the Town’s five-year capital plan for the period FY 08 – 12 and develop specific recommendations for FY 08 for consideration at the 2007 Annual Town Meeting. The group met 14 times over the winter and spring to evaluate and prioritize requests from the Town, schools and libraries for major capital expenditures that have an estimated useful life of at least five years and cost at least \$5,000.

Our goal for the past decade has been to allocate 10% of the tax levy to capital needs, a plan cited favorably two years ago by Moody’s. However, operating budget needs have prevented this. Annual Town Meeting in 2006 approved a capital budget for FY 07 using only 8.2% of the tax levy. This year, JCPC voted to support using 8.2% of the levy in FY 08 if the May 1 override of Proposition 2 1/2 had been approved by voters. It was not approved, so 7% of the levy was used instead, in order to keep the capital budget in line with reduced operating budgets.

Proposals for capital plan funding exceeded available revenues by more than \$1.5 million. In order to construct a capital plan balanced with projected revenues, some capital recommendations were reduced in amount, many were deferred to later years, and many were eliminated altogether and placed onto an “unfunded” list for reconsideration in future years.

JCPC recommended and Town Meeting approved expenditure of \$500,000 of Chapter 90 money from the State for qualifying road projects.

Expenditures for capital equipment recommended by JCPC and approved by Town Meeting were: \$12,000 to replace one Town Hall copier/printer; \$100,500 to replace/upgrade Town computers and network equipment; \$172,000 for software upgrades and scanning of paper documents; \$95,000 for permitting software, inspectors’ laptops, GIS database maintenance; \$130,000 for four police cruisers; \$206,000 (90% funded by a federal grant) to replace firefighters’ protective gear; \$45,000 to replace a DPW pickup; \$23,000 to replace a Conservation Department pickup truck; \$3,500 for one defibrillator for LSSE use at the pools and other programs; \$19,000 to replace an LSSE van; \$30,000 for a used pickup truck for the building maintenance department; \$5,000 to replace library chairs and study tables; \$20,000 to replace/upgrade library computers; \$75,000 to replace a 1995 school bus; \$75,000 to replace three Special Education school vans; \$14,000 for energy catalyst devices to improve school heating system efficiency; \$15,000 for School Department phone upgrades; \$25,000 for school copier/printers; \$45,096 to replace/repair school audio-visual equipment; and \$159,882 to replace/upgrade school computers and related equipment.

Expenditures for buildings and facilities recommended by JCPC and approved by Town Meeting were \$5,500 for a Town Hall chiller unit; \$50,000 for Bangs Community Center interior maintenance (grant-funded); \$30,000 for sidewalk improvements; \$5,000 for South Amherst

Campus slate roof repairs; \$2,500 for Knox boxes for schools; \$8,000 for fire station generators and repairs; \$20,000 for police station exterior maintenance; \$25,000 for a Public Works facility study; \$5,000 for Mill River pool chain link fencing replacement; \$15,000 for Cherry Hill gasoline fuel storage tank and security fence; \$10,000 for the Master Plan; \$12,000 for an actuarial valuation; \$6,000 for Jones Library window replacement; and \$10,000 for asbestos removal at elementary schools.

Also, JCPC recommended and Town Meeting approved borrowing \$755,000: \$675,000 cost of repointing and repairing the masonry exterior of Town Hall, and \$80,000 to bring the East Street School into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act by building a handicapped-accessible bathroom and an entrance ramp. The \$80,000 is in addition to the \$15,000 Town Meeting appropriated last year for the East Street School project.

Items not funded due to the failure of the Proposition 2 ½ override were: \$19,000 for replacement copier/printers for Town Hall; \$22,500 for replacement computer hardware/software for the Town; \$83,000 for refurbishing the Fire Department's 20-year-old aerial truck; \$45,000 to replace a 10-year-old DPW pickup truck; \$95,000 to replace the DPW's 1983 sidewalk plow; \$3,500 for a second defibrillator unit for LSSE use; \$40,000 for replacement computer hardware/software for the schools; \$2,500 in janitorial equipment for the Town building maintenance department.

Our entire Five Year Capital Plan Report for FY 08 -12 can be found as an appendix to the Finance Committee's Report to Town Meeting and on the Town's website.

JOINT CAPITAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Robert Kusner, Select Board

Gerald Weiss, Select Board

Elaine Brighty, School Committee

Andrew Churchill, School Committee

Kay Moran, Finance Committee

Andrew Steinberg, Finance Committee

Patricia Holland, Jones Library Trustees

Molly Turner, Jones Library Trustees

Staff Liaison: John Musante, Finance Director/Treasurer